

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillor J T Jones (Chair)

Councillors C J S Atkins, A Banks, M Bowen, J Bull, B Cawley, J Davies, M A Deaville, S Ellis, B Emery, E Fallows, K Flunder, A Forrester, M Gledhill, D Grocott, T Hall, K Harrison, A Hart, N Hawkins, G Heath, I Herdman, B A Hughes, K J Jackson, P Jackson, C R Jebb, B Johnson, I Lawson, G Lockett, M A Lovatt, M M Lovatt, I J Lucas, T McNicol, D Ogden, C Pearce, N Podmore, D Price, S E Ralphs MBE, J Redfern, P Roberts, S Scalise, H Sheldon MBE, E Wain, J Walley, R Ward, A Wilkinson, P Wilkinson, C Wood and M Worthington

APOLOGIES: Councillors R Alcock, G Bond, L D Lea, L A Malyon, T Riley, D Shaw, D Trigger and P Wood

Prayers were offered by Reverend Dr Phil Locket.

37 **FORMER COUNCILLOR AND CHAIRMAN - STAN EYRE**

The Council stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor and Council Chairman, Stan Eyre.

38 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 4 October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

40 **CHAIRMAN'S OR LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE, IF ANY.**

The Chairman reminded councillors that a Burns Night had been organised for 2 February at Biddulph Town Hall, tickets were available for £10 per person.

41 **TO CONSIDER AND DEBATE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET, OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS AND COMMITTEES, IF ANY.**

41a **AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - 26 OCTOBER 2018 - TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

RESOLVED:

That the treasury management position as at 30 September 2018 be noted.

41b **STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 16 NOVEMBER 2018 - ANNUAL REPORT 2017/19**

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

41c **LICENSING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE - 30 NOVEMBER 2018 - GAMBLING POLICY UPDATE – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES 2019-2022**

RESOLVED:

That the revised Policy be approved.

42 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MEETINGS IN THE INTERIM PERIOD PRIOR TO THE COUNCIL MEETING, IF ANY.**

42a **CABINET - 4 DECEMBER 2018 - UPDATED MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 TO 2022/23**

RESOLVED:

That the updated Medium Term Financial Plan be endorsed.

43 **NOTICES OF MOTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE NO. 8, IF ANY.**

43a **NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR C. WOOD - MARKET PROVISION**

NM:“Following the services scrutiny meeting on 18/7/18 it was discovered that there is blatant discrimination from this council towards Biddulph town regards the funding allocation for the provision of markets and financial support for the 3 towns of the Staffordshire Moorlands, at the presentation there was no mention of Biddulph market which was disgraceful and no visible support financially from this council to maintain and improve the market provision in Biddulph. I would like to move that this council shares out the money allocated towards market provision to all the 3 towns equally, based on population of each town and that Biddulph gets ongoing support to improve the market provision.”

Members discussed various ways in which the District Council could support the market provision in Biddulph which included both financial and officer resources.

As an **AMENDMENT** it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that:

“This Council supports Biddulph Markets fairly, financially and with officer support to improve market provision in the town.”

On being put to the vote, the **AMENDMENT** was **CARRIED**.

1. Question received from Councillor Cawley:

“If a claimant is awaiting a decision for a Universal Credit award or is being sanctioned the individual can request a Nil Income Form from the Council . This will reinstate housing benefit and Council Tax. It will also give the applicant access to further help such as Utility Meter Credit and food vouchers . In the last financial year how many forms have been requested from SMDC and actioned by the Council ?”

Response – Portfolio Holder for Customer Services

Prior to Universal Credit roll out, claimants presenting with such circumstances would be asked to complete a standard claim form stating nil income which could trigger access to additional help depending on the individual circumstances.

The Council have had no such requests in the last financial year.

Once a claimant has moved onto Universal Credit, former Housing Benefit applicants are not able to make a nil claim to reinstate Housing Benefit as the system gateway is closed once the case switches over. Instead, they can request an advanced payment or budgeting loan from Universal Credit/DWP.

Their council tax reduction will continue and will be reviewed once the Universal Credit decision is received.

If an existing housing benefit claimant is being sanctioned, housing benefit payments will continue.

There are a number of triggers for food voucher eligibility, including crisis and debt, for utilities the advice is normally to reach agreement with the energy supplier or use a local welfare assistance scheme like Citizens Advice.

SMDC’s Customer Service teams and Citizens Advice can support, advise and signpost people through all of the above, depending on their individual circumstances and we have extensively trained a range of frontline staff and recruited more specialised advisers to do just that. Our teams are in constant dialogue with DWP, CAB and many other partners as the roll out continues and rules and procedures are evolving. We are doing everything we can to support claimants through the process.

In response to supplementary questions the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would issue a written clarification with regards to paragraphs 3 and 5 of the above response and the need to update the Council’s website. This was as follows:

It was confirmed that the information stated in the response was correct. This had been checked with the DWP. SMDC officers would, however, do everything they can to support and signpost vulnerable claimants, as also stated in the response. Officers would review and update the website pages where necessary, adding additional links where signposting to further information and support is available. The Council would urge Councillors who are approached by residents to seek clarity from the Authority or Citizens Advice and be aware of the top 5 issues/points of clarity:

- Universal Credit claims cannot be backdated so it is imperative that applicants apply as soon as possible
- The Housing Benefit (HB) Gateway has closed and we cannot accept new HB applications (except for those in the exempt categories)
- Those on HB already do not need to change their claims until invited to do so by the DWP, once they do there is no going back
- A separate claim still needs to be made for Local Council Tax reduction
- There is the facility to apply for an advance payment for those in hardship while they await a UC claim decision, this is via DWP

2. Question received from Councillor Atkins:

“What is the latest update on the completion of the lease for Leek's Haregate Community Centre?”

Response – Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the matter was being dealt with and would be completed shortly with Your Housing.

In response to supplementary questions the Leader of the Council commented that the Centre was a fantastic asset for the community and that regular meetings take place between the Council and Your Housing.

3. Question received from Councillor K. Jackson:

“Have any officers of SMDC had any contact with Aldi with regard to the Meadows site in Biddulph if so when?”

Response – Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council confirmed that general discussions had taken place between officers and Aldi and other discount supermarkets with regard to the developments in the Staffordshire Moorlands, but there had been no discussion whatsoever with regards to the Meadows site.

In response to supplementary questions the Leader of the Council explained that the Cabinet of Staffordshire County Council would shortly make a decision with regards to the Growth Deal and assured councillors that District Council officers had not met and had discussions with Aldi with regards to the Meadows site.

45 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC:

RESOLVED - That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.

46 **TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10, IF ANY.**

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services responded to a question received from Councillor Lockett with regards to data protection legislation.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

_____ Chairman _____ Date